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## Defending biblical truth

The Government has admitted that a broad ban on so-called LGBT conversion therapy risks being challenged in the courts.

The overdue acknowledgement of the legal difficulties that await is welcome.

Any such legislation would fall foul of human rights laws. Abuse and coercive practices are already illegal. Equalities Minister Roderic O'Gorman's plans would instead threaten parental freedoms and the ordinary work of churches.

But Government ministers can act to protect gender-confused

people, by implementing the very clear recommendations of the highly influential Cass Report.

It challenges the widespread use of puberty blockers on youngsters.

The claim that someone's 'true gender' can be different to their biological sex has taken root in many areas of society. The Report marks a significant and welcome milestone in the battle against radical transgender ideology – a battle the Institute has been fighting for more than twenty years.

## 'Conversion therapy' law delayed

Equalities Minister Roderic O'Gorman has admitted that the legal difficulties of banning so-called conversion therapy have forced the Government to delay its legislative plans.

O'Gorman had previously stated his intent to pass a ban by the end of 2023. But he now admits that some aspects are "extremely complex" and a new law is unlikely during this Government's lifetime.

He explained: "I wanted to make sure it covered quasi-religious practices and quasi-therapeutic practices, and to ensure those very necessary



▶ Equality Minister Roderic O'Gorman

**"extremely complex"**

RODERIC O'GORMAN

conversations that take place when someone is exploring their gender identity or sexual orientation wouldn't be impacted.

"Balancing those elements is proving

tricky in terms of getting those clear legal definitions. We want legislation that is effective and robust and safe from legal challenge."

The Christian Institute has been at the forefront of opposition to a ban on conversion therapy, warning that it threatens

gospel freedom and the ordinary work of churches.

Deputy Director Simon Calvert said that the legal advice it has received on various proposals has always been clear that there are "multiple risks to the human rights of innocent parents, pastors and professionals".

# 'Health policy emergency' as ten thousand babies aborted

The number of abortions in the Republic of Ireland reached a record high in 2023, new figures have revealed.

The Department of Health reported that 10,033 abortions were carried out in 2023 – 23 per cent more than the previous year.

The majority (98 per cent) were performed before twelve weeks, while 129 babies were aborted because doctors thought they were 'likely to die'. Just 28 abortions were performed to prevent a risk to life or "serious harm" to

the mother's health.

Carol Nolan TD urged the Government to treat the "epidemic of loss" as a "health policy emergency" in light of annually increasing numbers.

Sandra Parda of the Life Institute said: "Instead of acting as cheerleaders for abortion, and even considering liberalising the law even further, the government needs to realise that the abortion rate must now be treated as an emergency that urgently needs full attention."

Abortions have rocketed by 250 per cent since the



## "epidemic of loss"

CAROL NOLAN TD

Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018 repealed legal protections for mother and child five years ago.

But Health Minister Stephen Donnelly

welcomed last year's 55 per cent increase in the number of hospitals providing abortions.

The Health (Termination of Pregnancy) (Safe Access Zones) Act 2024, which is now law, bans any pro-life presence within 100 metres of facilities where abortions are carried out.

# Govt 'resisting endless pressure' to water down gambling reforms

The Government has pledged to pass gambling restrictions into law by the end of October.

Justice Minister James Browne, who introduced the Gambling Regulation Bill in 2022, said he has resisted "endless" pressure to weaken the Bill's restrictions on advertising and stake limits for slot machines, but allowed amendments for charity lotteries.

The legislation – currently under consideration by the Seanad – would establish a national regulator, create a social impact fund, and ban advertising

across on-demand services, television and radio between 5:30am and 9pm.



In the UK, The Christian Institute recently urged the Westminster Government to prioritise its manifesto pledge to tackle gambling regulation.

In a letter to the UK's new Culture Secretary, Lisa Nandy, Institute Director Ciarán Kelly highlighted three areas where quick, effective action can be taken: gambling advertising, child protection, and online stakes.

He warned: "There is too much of the 'Wild West' about the UK's current gambling laws. The time to act is now."

## Senators: 'Protect kids from porn epidemic'

Seanad Éireann has called for children to be better protected from the dangers of online pornography.

At Second Stage of Senator Rónán Mullen's Protection of Children (Online Age Verification) Bill, there was wide support for preventing under-18s from accessing pornography. Senators highlighted its association with violence against and degradation of women.

Senator Mullen stated: "We must protect children and make our society safe for women to walk the streets and go about their daily lives realising that the men around them see them not as objects but in a respectful, empathic way as equal partners in humanity."

Catherine Martin TD, the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, raised issues with his proposals, but said it is a "key" Government priority to protect children from "age-inappropriate content like pornography".

The Bill carries a maximum fine of €500,000 and up to ten years in prison for providers that allow pornographic material to be accessed without robust age-verification.

## McEntee backtracks on unwanted hate speech Bill

The Government has delayed the most divisive aspect of its 'hate speech' Bill, following widespread criticism.

Minister for Justice Helen McEntee accepted that the "incitement to hatred element does not have a consensus" and would be "dealt with at a later stage".

However, she still pledged to continue with plans in the Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill to allow tougher sentences where crimes are perceived to be motivated by hostility towards a protected group.

One of the Bill's most vocal opponents, the former Attorney General Senator Michael McDowell, welcomed the announcement. He said the Government's refusal to define the term "hatred" could have led people to be "prosecuted on very flimsy words".

He emphasised: "The reality is that the right to free speech also entails the right to offend".

The proposed law could have covered sermons commending marriage and celibacy and condemning sexual immorality, as well as online statements denying that it is possible to 'change sex'.



Minister for Justice Helen McEntee

## CI appoints its new Director

The Christian Institute has appointed Ciarán Kelly as its new Director, following the sudden death of Colin Hart in March.

Mr Kelly, who joined the Institute in 2014, has been promoted to the position on a permanent basis, after stepping in as Acting Director during the four-month recruitment process.

The Institute's Chairman of Trustees, Revd Dr Richard Turnbull, said: "There is no one more suited to lead the Institute for the challenges that lie ahead."

The new Director asked for prayer, and invited all Bible-believing Christians to join with the Institute in "speaking up for what is good and right and true, and contending for the relevance of God's moral law to all people in our own day".



WATCH [the.ci/NewDirector](https://www.the.ci/NewDirector)

# Ireland urged to act on UK Cass Review's exposé of trans drugs

Independent Senator Sharon Keoghan has urged the Government to heed the UK's landmark Cass Review for the sake of gender-confused children in Ireland.

Senator Keoghan called for a Seanad debate on the issue as she criticised the HSE for only planning to review its model of care in 2026.

In April, the Cass Review concluded that giving trans drugs to children is based on "remarkably weak evidence". It called for a review of the use of cross-sex hormones, and

for gender-confused children to receive a holistic assessment of all their needs. Its recommendations have already been adopted across the UK National Health Service.

The Senator highlighted the Review's concerns about "a single focus on gender and the need for puberty blockers".

"This then prevents the other issues affecting the child or young person from being addressed. Puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones should not be routinely prescribed."



Senator Sharon Keoghan

Seanad Éireann leader, Senator Lisa Chambers, said the issue was "complex", but accepted there are "certainly questions to be asked in this State about how we have dealt with those issues to date".

According to the HSE, 233 referrals were made by consultants in Ireland to the Tavistock clinic, London's discredited gender identity service for children, between 2012 and 2022.

## Join the team

Candidates will be Evangelical Christians who are highly motivated to apply biblical principles to the family, education and public policy. Full and part-time applications will be considered.

**For more information contact:**

☎ 0044 191 281 5664

✉ [judi.coulson@christian.org.uk](mailto:judi.coulson@christian.org.uk)

## Legal update

We have now incorporated in Ireland *An Institiúid Chríostaí* Company Limited by Guarantee. It will now apply to the Charities Regulator for charitable status. This is an important step towards being able to work more fully in Ireland.

## Ask us to visit your church

If you would like us to speak at your church on key issues for Christians, email us at:

✉ [roi@christian.org.uk](mailto:roi@christian.org.uk)



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Tel: 0044 191 281 5664 | Email: [roi@christian.org.uk](mailto:roi@christian.org.uk) | Web: [the.ci](http://the.ci) | Published in October 2024

Registered office: The Christian Institute, Wilberforce House, 4 Park Road, Gosforth Business Park, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE12 8DG, UK